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Seventeenth Century Golden Era of French Drama

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SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

GOLDEN ERA

OF

FRENCH DRAMA

A thesis
presented to the faculty
as a part of the requirement
for a B. A. Degree

By

VERA P. DUPLISSIS

XAVIER UNIVERSITY

May 23, 1933

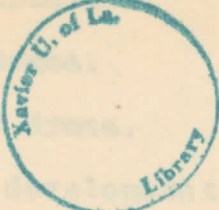
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- A. The term.
- B. Origin of dress.
- C. Division of dress.
- II. Historical development of dress.
- A. Greek Dress.
- B. Roman Dress.
- C. Dress of the Middle Ages.
- III. Seventeenth Century Classical Age of French Dress.
- A. 1600 - 1650 Period of preparation.
- B. 1650 - 1680 Golden Age.
- C. 1680 - 1710 Period of decline.
- D. 1710 - 1750 Period of reaction.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated
to my beloved parents, who have
through their earnest efforts
made possible my College educa-
tion.

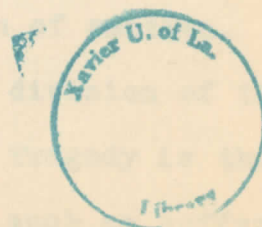
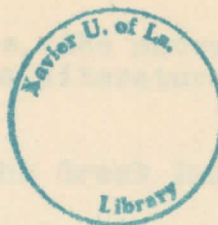
- A. Life and place in literary world.
- B. Character.
- C. Style of writing.
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- E. Life.
- F. Character.
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- VI. Authors.
- A. Life.
- B. Character.
- C. Analysis of works and style.
- VII. Summary.

C O N T E N T S

- I. Drama.
 - A. The term explained.
 - B. Origin of drama.
 - C. Division of drama.
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 - A. Greek Drama.
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 - B. Character.
 - C. Analysis of works and style.
- VII. Summary.



SEVENTEENTH CENTURY THE GOLDEN ERA
OF
FRENCH DRAMA

"In science, read by preference, the newest works; in literature, the oldest. The classic literature is always modern." -----Bulwer.

Drama is a word belonging to the Greek language which means action. It is applied to that form of literature which has action in it and is suited for performance. A drama usually tells a story either by means of speeches or dialogue, these are to be spoken by actors impersonating characters and performing the actions according to the story. In so doing the actors make use of such devices as facial expression, gesture, scenic paintings and many others which help to imitate natural scenes.

As far as we can remember mimicry has been a trait of humans. It may have been in games, sports, dances or even in religious ceremonies yet it was a part of primitive culture. It was, however, rather late in the development of civilization that the drama was considered important to literature.

Today dramas are written in prose, the drama during classical times was regarded as one of the three divisions of poetry and thus we have it differentiating from the epic, narration of events and the lyric, expression of emotion. Another distinction due to the Greeks is the division of the drama into two species, tragedy and comedy. Tragedy is that which deals with the serious themes of life, such as suffer-

ing and death. On the other hand, the comedy deals with life's follies and absurdities mixed with fun and sentiment. Besides these, we have other dramas which stand outside the strict limits of either class; such are satires in Greek, morality in Middle ages, tragic comedy and pastoral during Renaissance, drame in modern French and the melodrama at present, denoting a mixed and uncritical form. Nevertheless, the two species survive, the common distinction between the two depending on the presence of a happy or unhappy ending.

The earliest examples of drama are found in Greek, with these we begin the historical development and general characteristics of the literary drama of Athens. The Greek drama originated from the dithyrambic songs which were chanted by the choruses who impersonated the satyr, followers of Dionysius during festivals in honor of the gods. After a time spoken verses and dialogues were introduced in the midst of choral odes in which were both, tragedy and comedy. Thespis in 650 B. C. introduced to the chorus of an actor, to fill in with speech and mimicry, the intervals of singing and dancing. To him is also credited the "attic tragedy" which rapidly developed and which owes its development to the dramatic literature of the world. This dithyrambic chorus consisted of fifty men who were separated into choruses of twelve each. These plays were composed in groups of four and three tragedies sometimes on the same subject, and the fourth was a satyric play retaining the satyrs of the ancient festivals. Each play consisted of a series of passages

of dialogues interspersed by odes of the chorus. The dialogue introduced various persons and developed a complete story usually taken from mythology dealing with the life of some hero. Not more than three actors constituted a play, Aeschylus introduced the second actor and later Sophocles the third. The chorus took part in all plays but its main function was the singing of odes and dancing. Practically all subjects for these plays were taken from mythology. The same subjects were treated by several dramatist in different manners. In so doing much freedom was allotted to the treatment of myths and thus developed a wider field of subject matter. Aeschylus an early Greek writer treated the myths as supernatural revelations, whereas Sophocles another early writer was interested in human nature and the moral life.

After the fifth century tragedies began to be numerous and popular in many other Greek towns and later spread to Rome. The comedy another form of drama now sprang from the worship of Dionysius, developing from frolic and buffoonery of the harvest festivals. This comic element was received with much interest as the tragedy.

The early development of the drama in Rome is similiar to that of the Greeks. Roman drama is indeed known to us only through the works of Plantus, Terence and tragedies of Seneca. Terence aimed at the literary excellence protesting against extreme coarseness and brutality of his audience, following Menander a Greek writer. Plantus also followed characteristics of the Greeks mixed with early Roman farces,

at all events he exhibits a coarseness and directness suited to his audience and characteristic of Roman taste. The Romans borrowed rhetorical imitations of Euripides and Greek tragic writers, dealing with most sensational and bloody stories from Greek mythology. The Romans in their drama gave over to bloody spectacle and indecent pantomime. It was not until the early fathers attacked the indecency of the Romans that the drama was changed to a more classic theme.

After the destruction of the Roman theatres by the christians, all knowledge of classical drama practically disappeared. A different multiform drama arose without the dependence on the classical precedence. This type did not attain much literary value but, did have a lot of influence on the modern drama. The origin of these medieval dramas are due to sports, games, festivals and spring and harvest celebrations. However, the main source was through the church liturgy from which we have plays written dealing with Creation through Judgment. The Offices for Easter and Christmas offered much subject matter for dramatic elements. Through guilds and other organizations plays became enormous. Among the earliest plays we have "Adam" written in the twelfth century and "Miracles" in the thirteenth century. The acts of the Apostles which consisted of 62,000 lines and occupied forty days for their performance were even dramatized. The lives of the saints were even dramatized. Plays became so important that the performance of plays by guilds extended to nearly every town of importance. In France the drama was not of the religious theme both in the

secular mysteries and also in farces. Though the religious drama was quite artless, it did show development. It was evident that to be understood by the illiterate audiences both realistic and spectacular enforcement was necessary. An addition of comic and simple episodes were furnished which gave an opportunity for some inventiveness. It was at this time that the tendency of morality was being developed. Morality is the presenting of a moral lesson through personified abstractions. Morality was an advance in requiring inventions of plots and thus centering the interest on a moral conflict.

The seventeenth century is the most noteworthy epoch in the history of French literature. The circumstances of this age are especially favorable for literary development. To begin with France being conscious of her greatness in European statescraft deems it necessary to withdraw dependence on foreign literatures. Therefore she fashions new literary forms which she bids other countries copy. Then too, authors are patronized by society and the court. Intellectual conditions are especially favored. The national mind steeped in the learning and culture of the classes has become strengthened to emancipate itself from the yoke of imitation. To understand the development of French literature of the seventeenth century we must consider it through three periods. First, from 1600 to 1659 is the period of preparation. Second, from 1659 to 1688 the Golden Age of Classicism. Third, from 1688 to 1715 the period of transition between the seventeenth and

eighteenth century.

During the first period poets had followed Ronsard a laurel poet whose writings showed great influence of Horace and Pindar. Ronsard living in the sixteenth century was subject to the rule of imitating ancient writers. French literature was destined to development but, as long as imitation continued French literature would be going around in a circle and getting no where. What was needed for improvement? The first need was that of discipline. Too much liberty was given poetry as in politics and morals. Second, poetry could be made social, that is it could be made to appeal to the taste of all the people. Third, it could have the cult of reason. Fourth, it could have a religious sentiment and be a lot more christian. As the preparation of this reformation was going on, Corneille the great genius appeared writing dramas in which burst forth all the forces of this epoch. Corneille wrote his chief work in the midst of this tumult. Not long after the first need in literature, discipline triumphed. Of course, this work of reorganization would not be without revolts. Even though Corneille and the heroic romancers used all possible energy to bring out their conceptions of man, as one superior to his passions through his generosity and his will, yet the poets and realistic romancers being against the sublime wrote on base and trivial subjects presenting the most vulgar and vile man as their ideal. However, in spite of the oppositions political and literary France was organized. Henry IV concentrated the power between the hands

of some poets, theorists and critics. Among the poets was Malherbe who was given the power of dictating the rules of poetry. Balzac was made the authority on rhetoric, the theorists fixed the rules for dramas. Vaugelas drew out the language code. The academy acted as a sort of senate which was concentrated in the hands of literary authority. Malherbe aimed to purify all terminology of the language and to fix set forms for prosody. Though Malherbe was a poet of valor but, not of inspiration; he followed some what Ronsard, in that, he believed in copying from the ancients only, he preferred copying from the Latins rather than the Greeks. He also accepted the distinction of people which was also of Ronsard's school. He repudiated the conception of the poet, maintaining that the poet is impersonal and should express general ideas. These rules of Malherbe were disposed however, by Regnier a poet who in many ways recalled the sixteenth century. Regnier insisted on freedom of the poet, basing his proof on the fact that, it is only as one feels can he write. Agreeing with Regnier at the time were a group of poets called the "Grotesque" among whom was St. Amant Theophile de Viau a direct heir of the Pleiades. At this time arose the culture of French society, during which was the salon an institution presided over by women. It was at this institution that men of the world met literary men to discuss serious questions. The first salon was that of Marquise de Rambouillet, here people of superior intellect and culture met and exacted from their guests refinement and elegant manners, which contributed to chasten

the language and strip it of all low and vile words. They did more than this, they enriched the language with clever expressions, they helped to develop taste for precision, they also favored the study of the human heart which was the grand theme of the seventeenth century. To aid the reform Richelieu founded the French Academy which exercised the same influence as the salon. It watched over the purity of the language and over its development. Vaugelas was one of its members a great and noteworthy grammarian at the time. At this time Balzac created French prose and gave set rules for French prose composition. He also gave to literature rhythm flow and harmony of the period. Another great member of the salon, Voiture added raciness and ease of movement. These two were masters of style in the early seventeenth century.

The craving for order and uniformity which were necessary to literature seized the theatrical world and achieved the masterpieces of the classic drama. John Mairet produced "Sophonisbe" in which unity of time, place and action are observed. It is a tragic plot, without a comic element. With the framework for the tragedy laid, Corneille wrote his masterpiece "Le Cid" and thus completed the structure. Corneille's work portrayed excellence and a genius writer. Corneille displayed in his writings artistic qualities which had taken sixty years to develop.

We now enter the second period. This was the greatest epoch of the seventeenth century. The best literary characteristics having been formed are now to be enforced. The king

as in government carries out his taste for regularity, for harmony and nobility in literature, thus he checks the waywardness that characterized the preceding period. From this time on in literature nothing is appreciated but, that which follows the rules for reformation. Thus we have masterpieces being written during this period. Among these writers were Baileau who introduced the satires. Baileau's principles were; seek the truth be guided by reason and imitate nature. These principles were put into practise through Moliere and Racine. Moliere another great writer of this period began to paint human life and character as he saw it. He produced the comedy "Precieuses Ridicules" in which are points drawn from observation and study. Moliere is not concerned with plot, each incident stands on its own merits, he analyzes his characters and usually they portray some particular failing. His other characters are not of any special period but, portray humanity of all ages, that is, the hypocrite, the miser, and the coquette. Moliere made a deep study of human nature and characters which made his comedies reach the standard of that period.

Following Moliere in 1667 was Racine another great writer of the seventeenth century writing "Thebaide" and "Alexandre". His greatest work being "Phedre" which was equal to Corneille's "Le Cid". Racine bases his plays on reason rather than imagination, of course there is not as much grandeur but, still there is a wider range for the use of psychology in his plays. In his plays there is simple action which is sustained only through the interests, sentiments and emotions of his characters.

He paints ambition through out his plays but love dominates all of his tragedies. So it is, all forms of literature bloom forth. Religious literature and even pulpit oratory is elevated to a high standard of excellence. It is also during this period that various orders were being founded or reformed having among their numbers great oratorians such as the Jesuits which are noted today as being the intellectuals and greatest orators of our day. To end this period Bossuet with his mighty voice, eloquently preaching Lenten sermons literature makes another step upward.

The third period 1688 to 1715 is one of transition. It was now eighteen years elapsed and literature was in its glory. This reformation was largely due to all forces of society and faculties of mind working in harmony to produce classicism. In 1688 the king aged, now ceased to take interest in literature as before. Discipline is relaxed, the salon for a while had been eclipsed by the Court was gradually ascending, thus we have the grotesque themes creeping in again but, to do no harm because classicism has its foothold as it were. To the writers of the Golden Age the period was long but proved to be successful through their constant interest in uplifting French literature to classicism.

Before these periods we heard very little of dramas however, throughout this period we have dramas developing rapidly through the three great writers, Corneille, Racine and Moliere. These three have shown their skill in each of their writings. To understand better their motives and efforts in the develop-

ment of the drama we will go into the lives of each.

Pierre Corneille was born at Roven, France in 1606. It was here he studied as a boy the classics. Corneille as a young writer was filled with an affected style and heroic sentiments of Lucain and Seneca. Being very fond of the theatre, at twenty-four years old he wrote the comedy "Melite" which he gave to a Parisian actor while passing through Roven. This comedy was played at Paris with success in 1631. Very soon Corneille was interested in seeing it played, after which he began to write similar pieces among them were, "Clintandre", "La Veuve", "La Galerie du Palais", "la Suivante" and "la Place Royale". There were other pieces of a different kind he wrote at this time, "Medee" a tragedy and a comical tragedy "l' Illusion Comique". In 1636 he wrote "Le Cid" whose subject was borrowed from the Spanish theatre. This was his first classic tragedy and was received with great praise by the people.

The marvelous success of "Le Cid" caused a lot of jealousy from the other authors during his time. Corneille defended these knocks of jealousy with vigor. So great was the quarrel of the authors concerning his work, that the Academy had to be called in to settle the quarrel. The Academy approved the work "Le Cid" which did not meet the satisfaction of some. To prove the value of his works Corneille began writing a series of chief works. Constituting the series were, "Cinna" and "Horace" in 1640; "Polyeucte" and "Pompee" in 1643 and "Rodogune" and "Menteur" in 1644. Later on he wrote

"Theodore", "Heraclius", "don Sanche" and "Pertharite". The latter failed and Corneille being discouraged retired from the theatre for some years.

During his period of retirement he reflected on his art and wrote "Ducours sur la tragedie". He also examined his past works with impartiality and corrected them. The remaining time was spent in writing hymns; it must be remembered that Corneille was a christian.

In 1659 at the request of Fouquet, Corneille returned to the theatre with "Oedipe" which was strongly applauded. However, the taste of the public had changed. Quinault had made spiritual love the mode and in order to regain his success Corneille tried to borrow from Quinault the ornament of his languages for his violent tragedy. The mixture of Quinault's and Corneille's writings was not fortunate and "Tite et Berenice" in 1670 and "Surena" was received coldly. After this Corneille abandoned definitely the theatre. He no longer wrote but, in his fire of jealousy was only supporting the success of his rivals while suffering a great deal from it. His resources were going down, the royal pension was no longer being paid him regularly. His life had come to be one of humiliations and suffering. He died in 1684 consoled and appeased by his Christian faith.

Corneille came into an epoch of violent passions and troubles but dominated his epoch through his heroic ideals of his Christian soul. Corneille was the creator of a tragedy which is the glorification of the force of the individual.

Corneille in his tragedy gave a new form to the hesitant people of his time. For that reason, he is called the father of the tragedy.

Corneille was a character full of fire and sentiments. If reproached by his friends for neglecting himself, he would laugh and say, "I am not any less for that, Pierre Corneille." He never lowered himself to others. He was criticized greatly for his pride and jealousy. Though he was a bit selfish and proud he did have good traits. Corneille was profoundly christian and wrote many hymns of the Virgin. The theatre of Corneille was deeply moral and remained always a source of rich grandeur for the soul. He had the gift of writing such that would lift the minds of the readers to a special atmosphere where only the noble sentiments hold place. He would also portray in his works the value of dominating the faculty of the will which goes to make the strong character. Always enforcing as he believed the ideal toward better men and that is conquering the will of the passions. He always brought out his christian ideals.

Corneille being the father of the tragedy had a style of writing that was different from that of his contemporaries. His works were filled with lofty sentiments. He believed in rapid action and strong dialogue. Throughout his writings there is clearness of exposition and beauty of form. If there is irony, it is put in comely and with geniality. His subtle wit is another point in his style which bears commendation. In following out the rules of the reformation, Corneille

does not imitate but, uses non historic subjects for his writings. All of his characters are of high rank. His writings are full of compression and all digressions, episodes, long soliloquies and minute descriptions that would destroy proportion is largely eliminated. The French people love of proportion and symmetry, restraint and logical order led to to the cult of form. Corneille strove for this and thus proved successful. Those are his good qualities. Corneille did have some qualities in his style that were a bit faulty, for example his heroisms were always very brutal, another is that his women characters did not support the force of violence as they should. On a whole Corneille's style was exceptional and he will always live on as the father of French drama.

Next to Corneille is John Racine who was born at Ferte-Milan on December 21, 1639. He was the son of John Racine and Jeanne Soonin. He became an orphan at a tender age, his mother died in 1641 and two years later his father died. He was reared by his grandmother, Marie Moulin. His primary education was received at Beauvais and in 1655 entered the school of the Granges under the direction of the Port Royalist. Racine being apt and being under such teachers as Lancelot, a Greek scholar and Nicole, the Latinist, made progress which left an effaceable mark not only on his mind but his character. He became an exceptional classic scholar, he had read and annotated all the ancient classics from Homer to Plutarch. He was capable of reciting long passages from the Greek romances,

taking as his model in dramatic art Euripides. Besides this he acquired the Puritanic tenacity of mind which was very important to his future work, that is uprightness and reasoning devotion. Being interested in studies he was ever ready to analyze spiritual and worldly sentiments because they offered problems for the head. Racine was destined for social success and intellectual recognition, while pursuing these, he was drawn from his Puritanism which was instilled in his youth. Racine was to leave Port Royal to attend Harcourt College in 1658 to study philosophy when his studies suddenly were terminated. He became a secretary at the hotel Luynes where a cousin of his, Vitart, was working. Being frequently in the company of Vitart, LeVasseur and La Fontaine he led as it were, a life of an emancipated scholar, that is in frequenting the theatres and keeping in mind his future intentions. He even promised these actors and actresses beautiful roles in his future tragedies. In 1660 he wrote "Ode a la Nympe de la Seine" which was on the Marriage of Louis XIV to Marie Therese. This ode was received with great praise by the king. In order to save him from writing poetry, he was carried far from Paris to his uncle Sconin at Uzes. Here he remained for fifteen months reading, reflecting and annotating ancient writers and the christian fathers. He studied diligently the Greeks, Latin and Italian poets and historians. Racine soon became tired of this and put an end to his exile by reentering Paris in 1663. He was now an accomplished scholar though still dominated by social and poetic ambitions. He was presented to the king and became

a fashionable poet much to the indignation of his friends and relatives of Port Royal. In the meantime he had written "Thebaïde". It was through La Fontaine that Racine had been brought into intimate relations with the court patrons of literature and with the classical realist which was called in 1660 the school of Chappelle, Furetiere, Moliere and Baileau. They united to preach naturalism and formed in the already successful dramatist a new theory of dramatic art.

Even though Racine continued on he was irritated by the attitude of his relatives at Port Royal. It was at this crisis that the poet in Racine was wrestling with the Puritan, and had gained for the moment the upper hand which was to last a life time. It was also at this time that Andromaque was written. He was not twenty-eight years old. This tragedy was more than a heroic spectacle, it was a real drama one which was destined for life. He was paid 100 ecus for Andromaque which is about \$60 in silver. It was received with almost as much sensation as Corneille's "Le Cid". Like every other writer this work caused him to lose some of his friends through jealousy. In 1668 to amuse himself he wrote "les Plaideur" his only comedy and "Britannicus" in 1669. He later wrote "Berenice" the same time Corneilles "Tite et Berenice" was being played at the theatre. Later he wrote "Mithridate", "Iphigenie", "Esther", "Athalie" and "Phedre" his master piece.

Though he was practically a success his conscience was to him a constant reminder of Port Royal and thus Racine turns once more to his memories of christian childhood. He decides

to live an honest man, marries Catherine of Romanent and renounces his flashy existence. He quits the theatre and lives a comfortable life. Even though he had given up the theatre he was still urged to write. He spent his time with his family. After constant begging of Madame de Maintenon to write more dramas, he transforms the history "Esther" into an elegie. Racine spent his last days with his family writing his "Memoires". He died in 1699.

Racine is a character which has a puzzling duality, that is he is a serious soul and an easily moved mind. He was religious, being of Puritan descent and very credulous so much so that he was even superstitious. He was loyal to the king, catering to his wishes as far as possible. Though he was exceedingly vain and irritable, he was easily influenced by those whom he loved and feared. Racine had a keen intellect, supple and strong. He was also a profound reader and thinker. He was possessed with powers of psychic analysis a remarkable delicacy and vitality of sentiment and an exquisite sense of literary art. The best that was in him always came to the front in his works. His writings show wit and sentiment, energy and poise, imagination as well as self restraint, and eloquence as well as repose. His writings proved that he studied and practised good forms of literature.

Racine had a style just the opposite of Corneille. Corneille had the flow of vigor but, Racine filled with love sentiments wrote with more tender emotions. In expressing love through his dramas, the most endearing phrases are used

in order to effect the emotion of tender love. If it was a scene of revolt, one could almost feel as it were the trembling or shuddering at the outbreak of such incidents. At times he is musical, wherein one can feel the easy flow of rhythm through his works. He is also some what a sensualist when he appeals to the senses in order to gain the heart. Racine works right to the individual through his emotional style. He is filled with naturalism, that is he tries or rather does stick close to the natural things, painting them as they really are. This is partly due to his affiliations with the school of 1660 Chappelle, Furetiere, Moliere and Boileau.

We now come to the French Comedy dramatist, John Baptiste Poquelin who afterwards was called Moliere. Moliere was born in Paris, January 15, 1622. His father John Poquelin was an upholsterer in the Rue St. Honore and later became valet of the king. This was the post that Moliere's father had destined for him to follow. However, Moliere did not adhere to this as his future work and his grandfather Louis de Cresse secretly encouraged him against it. Moliere's mother died in the meantime and his father remarried. Through the ungenial influence of the stepmother Louis de Cresse helped Moliere to leave for the hotel Bourgogne where his grandfather was director. It was here the kings tragedians gave their interpretations of the classical drama. Here the future comedian was inoculated with a passion for the histrionic art.

Moliere was sent to Clermont College which was at that time (was) the best and most popular school in Paris. Here, he

encountered as his classmates members of the first families of France. He was the schoolfellow of the Prince de Conti, the poet Hesnaut, Chappelle and the astronomer Cassendi. He was not lacking in any of his studies, he distinguished himself in Classics and in philosophy and afterwards followed the usual course of a complete education.

After he finished his studies his attraction for the theatre was awakened. In 1643 he organized with some members of certain well to do families of Parisian bourgeois a dramatic troupe of comedians of which he being the leader took the name Moliere and called the troupe "L'Illustre Theatre". After trying their fortune on three stages, the outcome was very scant. He then decided to survey the province, going from Nantes to Bordeaux, Toulouse, Narbonne and Lyons. His aspect now was varied of the diverse regions of France, his curiosity without cease was being aroused. So much so, that he would come and sit with a barber just to study his clients. These traits and experiences gathered, he spread improvised farces which were only the sketches of Moliere.

In 1658 Moliere returned to Paris. Under the protection of Prince of Conti he opened the celebrated theatre enriched by his chief works which was called the "Theatre Francais". "Les Precieuses Ridicules" represented in 1659 made a revolution. La Harpe says, for the first time one sees on the scene the picture of a real oddity. His work was then hailed by the spectators as the true comedy. Moliere feeling proud was heard to say, "I have more to do, I must study Plaute and Terence and

to examine the fragments of Menandre. I have only to study the world." He continued author and actor in the midst of success. Untiring caterer for the festival of the court Moliere was up to the end packed with royal bounty. Louis XIV honored him by protecting him against the resentment that his fancy had gained for him and also asked that Moliere be god-father of his first child. Through the king Moliere was lifted to the eyes of certain courtiers. These flattering distinctions of the public were not able to shelter Moliere from his domestic troubles. At forty years old he married Armande Bejart who was about seventeen years old. This union, through Moliere loved Armande became a source of bitterness because of the fact Armande was fond of pleasure and admiration and Moliere because of his position could not attend her devotions and thus Armande found adulation at the hands of others. This caused Moliere to have melancholy moods which were mixed with twinges of too well founded jealousy. However, in order to keep his troupe up he was to play the principal roles of his dramas. Moliere at the time was rated by a journal of the times as being a comedian from head to feet. It seemed that he had several voices, all speaking in him, a step, a smile, a wink of the eye and the moving of the head, he made his audiences conceive more things than a speech maker would have been able to say in one hour.

"Le Malade Imaginaire" was just being composed, the day of the fourteenth representation Moliere found himself suffering. He was advised not to play but he did not turn himself to follow this opinion and thus filled the role. Straining to hide

his sorrows with his forced smile, he was seized with a violent coughing spell, soon suffocated by the blood, lost use of speech. At the time ten religious called the Clarissa converts, known as swallows of Lent had just gathered in Paris, Moliere being very chritable to them, sent for the priest. Unfortunately the priest arrived too late. He died February 17th, 1673.

The Academy which had not been able to admit him to the number of its members a cause of his profession, placed a bust in the conference room with the inscription "nothing short coming of his glory, he failed to ours."

Moliere was a character sweet and kind, generous heart, always accessible to the needs of the indigent. He had joined to these natural qualities, profound convictions of the faith and the practise of Christian virtues. Without a doubt his pious information fom the Jesuits at Clermont College had one day brought forth fruit if an unwarned death had not come so sudden to break his career.

In analyzing Moliere's Comedies we find that he was especially good at farces. His writings were divided into three classes; first, comedies of intrigue, these are charged with incidents that are full of interest. Some were written in verse among those we have "Sgnarelle", "Les Facheux" and "L'Amphitryon". Among the prose we have "Don Juan", "Le Medicin", "Malgre Lui", "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme", "Les Fourberies de Scapin", and "Le Malade Imaginaire".

To the second group belong the comedies with Morals. Among these are, "Les Precieuses Ridicules", "L'Ecole Des Maris",

"L'Ecole des Femmes" and "Les Femmes Savante". In the third group are Comedies of Character, under which we have "Le Misanthrope" and "Le Tartufe".

Moliere had a mind of tradition purely French and Gaul. In reality he came from the old French farce, enlarged, enriched carried to its perfection but always solidly rooted in the popular tradition. This is why his comedy is national. It is human, true with an eternal truth. Moliere in his works are more concerned with his characters than his events. Believed in reality and the characters fit in with time and customs. He wrote well in both prose and verse. His verse is supple and sufficiently rich. There are traces of haste in his comedies which are due to the comic style. Moliere gives each of his characters a different language to fit the conditions and character portrayed, thereby making his style one worthy of note.

After having considered the lives of these dramatists and their work we find that French literature reached its pinnacle through the efforts of its writers. Without a doubt the 17th Century was one century of concentrated work. In the periods of 1600 to 1659 period of preparation, and the second period 1659 to 1688 the golden age wherein the success of the reforms could be plainly seen. France showed through determination that she could rise above the yoke of servile imitation. She had conquered in statescraft and political affairs, success could likewise be wrought in literature. During this age we have writers appearing who are eminent

today. Within the space of one hundred years France developed three note worthy dramatist, Corneille, the father of the tragic drama, Racine another tragic dramatist and Moliere a comic dramatist. Corneille and Racine were masters of compression. Corneille, Racine and Moliere show throughout their lives deep study and genius thinkers which were brought out to the highest extent in all of their writings. They were cultured and subject to reach the literary standard set by the king and his supporters such as Malherbe, Balzac and the French Academy. It can be readily seen that this 17th Century epoch was the golden era of French drama. Before this time drama was not considered important or even developed, in fact all literature was latent. It was only through this epoch that drama was developed. There being a general drive for better literature and all working in hamony for one end, success was sure to come. It is also during this period that the three unities time, place, and action were set as best form of writing dramas. Before this seventeenth century most all forms of literature whether dramas or what not were cheap and vulgar. Portraying as their ideal some false, vile human. With the seventeenth century came the age of classicism all that was not uplifting or classical could not be appreciated so thus in order to write in the seventeenth century the classical epoch the work would have to be superb. Thus the seventeenth century was the golden era of French drama.

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